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OUR ACTUAL NAVAL STRENGTH.

BY REAR-ADMIRAL GEO. W. MELVILLE, ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF OF THE
UNITED STATES NAVY.

IN the early spring of 1898, when war seemed inevitable between Spain and the United States, many naval experts of Continental Europe compared the relative fighting strength of the fleets that could be assembled by the prospective foes. It was apparently shown by graphic charts and official reports that the two navies were practically equal in strength, and the general prediction was made that, while the Americans might eventually be victorious, a conflict would greatly imperil the commercial prosperity, maritime development and financial standing of the United States. The naval outcome of that war falsified all such anticipations. The error of the forecast was due to the fact that armor and armament were used as the only bases of comparison, when in truth the weapon and the shield were merely two of many factors that constitute actual naval strength.

If naval strength were dependent only on the relative number of guns and the amount of armor possessed by naval Powers, then supremacy on the sea could be secured in a fraction of the time now required. Relative naval strength would be simply proportional to relative national wealth. Navies would be bought rather than created, and Admiralty officials would be ever on the lookout to purchase the fighting-ships of financially embarrassed Powers.

It is, of course, important that the war-ship should possess an efficient and reliable weapon, and it is also necessary to provide armor which, without being cumbersome, will yet resist the attack of the gun. But naval strength is something more than a few hundred guns mounted on well-protected platforms. It is helplessly dependent upon the auxiliaries that the fleet requires; and supremacy on the sea can only be secured by that nation

which is rich in natural, manufacturing, and material resources, and whose people possess or can acquire the sea habit.

Cost of Maintaining Naval Auxiliaries.—The fact that the battle-ship in itself does not constitute naval strength may be evidenced by significant circumstances. In maintaining dominion of the sea, Great Britain has invested from three to four times as much money in naval auxiliaries as in battle-ships. These auxiliaries include training-ships, torpedo-boats, supply-vessels, cruisers, arsenals, docks, and naval stations, as well as countless incidentals that are necessary to supplement or to support the vessels of the battle-line. It is the strength of the support back of the battle-ships that causes the experts of England at the present time to be very indifferent as to any projected alliance of naval Continental Powers.

A forcible illustration of the indirect expense involved in maintaining a military establishment was afforded in the case of the Egyptian campaign of twenty years ago, when a high official of the British War Office declared that it cost a guinea a day to keep each of the soldiers of Sir Garnet Wolseley in the field, though the pay of each private was only a guinea a month. The man on the firing line on that march up the Nile was an important personage; but it took men and money to keep him there, and to maintain for him communication with the base of operations.

Another way of bringing home the truth of the indirect cost, and immense auxiliary organization, requisite to maintain a military-naval establishment, is by recalling the fact that the Spanish-American war cost over a million dollars a day for over a year after the conflict commenced, although in less than three months from the time of the declaration of that war the Spanish fleets, in both Asiatic and North-American waters, had been destroyed or captured, and all open resistance upon the part of the Spanish troops had ceased in Cuba and the Philippines. Probably not one-fifth of the men who volunteered for service in that war had the privilege of reaching even the skirmish-line.

The ships that reach the battle-line, or the troops that are called upon for actual fighting purposes, comprise but a small portion of the forces that must be assembled in time of war.

An Approved Type of Battle-ship Not Yet Developed.—Then again the design of the war-ship is yet in a state of development. Less than three months ago, an order was given by the British

Admiralty to break up for junk the battle-ship "Inflexible," a vessel which twenty years ago represented the highest type of naval architecture. The "Inflexible" was a battle-ship which possessed citadels, thus attempting to mass guns and armor at the ends of the vessel, an incarnation of the battery installation of the fighting-ships of several hundred years ago. The first steel cruiser of the American Navy was placed in commission less than fifteen years ago, and yet one of these vessels, the "Philadelphia," is about being fitted up as a permanent receiving-ship, the vessel being unsuitable for naval purposes. The gun-platform is thus a factor of variable value, if the experts of to-day will consign to the scrap-heap a vessel that less than two decades ago represented one of the highest types of naval development. We are even told that a second-class battle-ship, or one of 9,000 tons, is now the proper one to build. If such contention is true, what is the military value of the 15,000-ton ships that have been constructed during the past five years by practically all the leading naval Powers?

Our Isolation and Geographical Position.—Probably one of the greatest indirect factors in giving us naval strength is our isolation. Only a few years ago, a Board of British Admirals reported that it would require three battle-ships upon the part of England to match two French vessels of like character, if a blockade of the French coast should be attempted. The British experts maintained that it would be necessary to give the blockading squadron this increased strength, because the French vessels within the harbors would have the support of the coast batteries, as well as the protection of the torpedo-mines planted in the channel approaches. The blockaded fleet would likewise have the opportunity to seek battle at will. The foreign ships, on the other hand, in being compelled to maintain an effective blockade, would be dependent upon auxiliaries for coal, ammunition, and supplies. If such an extra show of naval strength would be requisite upon the part of England for operation against a Power whose coast is almost within sight of her own, it is reasonable to presume that every European Power would require a fleet at least double the strength that we possess to operate against our shores. It is true that fortified harbors of other Powers exist to the north of the Maine coast, and to the southward of Porto Rico. Such ports might be used as bases of operation; but the modern fleet requires

a bay rather than a harbor for a suitable rendezvous, and thus there are limitations as to the military and strategic possibilities of the bases held by foreign Powers in North-American waters.

Insuperable Difficulty of Blockading our Coast.—The disadvantages under which a blockading fleet would labor, compared with the advantages which the fleet within the harbor would possess, can hardly be over-estimated. The blockading fleet would have but few reliefs to take the place of the sick and exhausted. All repairs to machinery or to the gun-gear would have to be made by the blockading force, instead of by shops on shore. A properly designed and well-equipped repair-ship could render effective service to the blockading squadron; but, as the Admiralty officials of many countries have not learned to appreciate fully the importance and necessity of such a vessel, there are practically none available for the purpose.

The home fleet could call upon thousands of available laborers to coal the ships, while this vexatious and distressing work would have to be done by the overworked men of the blockading squadron, and then the coaling task of the foreign fleet would have to be performed by the men under strain of their liability to be called to the guns even during the evolution. The invading fleet would have to batten down hatches at the approach of a gale, and the close atmosphere of the lower deck would make it impossible for the crews to secure needful rest.

It would not be long before the blockading fleet, in the presence of an aggressive foe, would be greatly weakened if not forced to disperse, for it is certain that competent and spirited commanders would take the blockaded ships out of harbor when there was a fighting chance for victory. The engineering weakness of the modern battle-ship for blockading purposes will be made manifest to the naval world if some nation ever attempts to operate against our principal Atlantic ports. One can hardly conceive how greatly our naval strength has thus been indirectly increased by reason of our isolation from those countries which aspire to naval supremacy.

Our Coal Resources.—The events of the past ten months have shown the country how easily a coal famine may be caused. Probably but few naval experts, outside those whose special function it is to give consideration to the question, realize the difficulty of insuring an adequate coal supply. In the Navy it is certainly

true that Coal is King, and probably in industrial affairs the expression more nearly represents a proverb. Coal is a very bulky article, and not only a large number of cars, but extensive piers and expensive machinery, are required to handle it rapidly and cheaply. There is a great disinclination upon the part of railroad officials, by reason of the time, trouble and expense which must be incurred, to increase the facilities for transporting and handling coal, and this accounts for the shortage of cars, for the lack of storage facilities, and for the constantly recurring possibility of a fuel famine.

"Coal, or the want of it, is the life or death of a fleet," and England is the only naval Power in the world that is on equality with America as regards the possession of an adequate supply of fuel of good steaming quality.

Probably the most impressive way of showing our military advantage as regards securing coal is to state, in the words of the Secretary of the Navy, that: "At present the Navy is obtaining the best domestic coal, at a cost of about \$2.50 per ton at the tide-water outlets of the mines." Of the 300,000 tons that were purchased within the United States for naval purposes, the average cost per ton, including transportation, was only \$5.26.

On the Pacific coast, where good coal is scarce, and where it must be transported long distances, the cost is nearly twice as great as on the Atlantic coast. The Standard Oil Company, however, is now building a pipe line which will convey crude petroleum from the California oil-fields to the Bay of San Francisco, and this fuel should eventually be delivered at the principal California ports at a price that will be as low as that of the best quality of coal that can be bought on the Atlantic seaboard. The Liquid Fuel Board of the Navy has shown that an installation of oil-burning appliances can be quickly fitted to marine boilers, and while there may be serious disadvantages connected with the installation of oil-burners on war-ships for distant service, such devices might be of inestimable military advantage if the war-ships were only required for defensive purposes.

In time of war it will not be sufficient to get some kind of coal, for that nation will be at a disadvantage which does not secure the best quality. In the China-Japan war, the latter country, though possessing immense beds of fuel within a few hundred miles of the Chinese coast, purchased all the Cardiff coal that

could be procured from ship or shore. In measuring our naval strength, therefore, with that of any other naval Power for work in the West Indies, our superiority from the coal standpoint can be regarded as an important factor.

Our Adequate Food Supply.—While our coal resources will inure to our military advantage, our food supply will likewise be a factor that must be taken into consideration in measuring naval strength. It is said that the land under cultivation in England one hundred years ago could feed over ten million people, while at present the yield would not support more than five million. As England receives from Russia about one-half as much grain as she receives from the United States, it is not surprising that there are experts in Great Britain who are more concerned about her food-supply in time of war than about any alliance that could be formed by Continental Powers.

With each succeeding year the sailor becomes a more highly trained and sensitive creature, and he must now receive a ration that was not enjoyed even by the Captains of the old-time frigates. The bewhiskered sailor, with bow legs, who was content with "salt horse," scouse, hard-tack, and grog, is now only found on a few brigs, barques, and schooners, and thus the food requirements of Nelson's sailors were extremely modest compared to the wants of the modern man-of-war's-man.

It has been said that Cervera's sailors were not impressed by our marksmanship, since "our fleet at Santiago accomplished what it did with less than four per cent. of hits," and yet "our Navy at that time had the reputation of having the best gunners in the world." It was our Navy ration which most astonished them; for it was after the Spaniards were received as prisoners that they learned that the same quality of dressed beef which was furnished the leading restaurants of our cities was being issued daily to the enlisted naval force. Fresh vegetables were also supplied to the blockading ships, and even fruit was brought from Hayti and Jamaica. On the hospital ship, aerated waters were bottled. Practically every ship on the blockading line had an ice-plant. Milk, chocolate, tea, and coffee were served as beverages, and some of the commissaries even sold pies and cakes. It has been unappreciated modesty which has prevented the officers of the Pay Corps from making known in its fulness the great work done by the Paymaster in all naval wars. Particu-

larly is the nation unacquainted with the work done by the Paymasters during the Spanish-American war. The sailors that can be rationed as our men were by the Paymasters of the Manila and Santiago fleets will be capable of work that cannot be secured from those whose food is either inadequate or of poor quality.

While it may not be necessary for us to concern ourselves about maintaining a food supply for either the fighting forces or for our people in time of war, there are other Powers which must give consideration to these questions. Our actual and relative naval strength is thus greatly increased by our superiority in this respect over any possible foe that would attempt to meet us on our own coast or in the West Indies.

The Ship-building Yard an Essential Auxiliary.—As the ship-building yard constitutes another element of naval strength, Great Britain is the only country that is superior to us in this respect. We have now twelve establishments which are ready to undertake contracts for the building of battle-ships and armored cruisers. We have two armor-plants whose owners will increase their output of manufacture to any extent demanded by the Government, provided some reasonable assurance is given that such corporations can expect a fair profit upon capital invested. We possess two establishments which will guarantee to make forgings of any size and quality that can be manufactured anywhere in the world. Any demand that the Government might make for steel castings could also be promptly met. There is nothing that enters into the construction of a battle-ship, whether it be attached to the hull, installed in the turret, or fitted in the engine and boiler rooms, whose crude product is not either found in one of our States or Territories, or procurable from a port that could not be captured or controlled by a possible enemy. The armor-plant, gun-foundry, forge, powder-factory, and the structural steel-mill are positive elements in determining naval strength.

Speed in war-ship-construction and rapidity in effecting naval repairs are thus important attributes of naval strength. With our skill and resources, we ought to build a ship as rapidly as our British cousins. The more ship-building plants this country possesses, the greater will be the speed construction of war-ships, for commercial rivalry will compel corporations to keep their plants up to the highest standard, and to secure tools requisite for hastening work. It might be incidentally stated that our ship-building

plants have got to make arrangements whereby they can contract for guns and armor as well as for engine and hull. The ship-builders of Great Britain have a great advantage over us, for several of them will contract for the ships complete, including hull, engines, armor, armament, and even coal and ammunition.

Our Transportation Facilities.—If there is one particular advantage that we possess over our commercial rivals, it is in the economy and rapidity with which we are able to handle materials. In cranes, derricks, and conveyors we are probably in the front rank. In methods of transportation, such strides have been made that “we have changed the conditions affecting the ore and coal-carrying trade, and as a result there has been made possible, by our superiority in handling the material, the lowest freight rates and the most rapid transportation in the world.” When we shall meet a strong foe, it will then be found how great a military advantage we possess by our transportation facilities, since it will permit all parts of the country to contribute quickly to the defence of our coast and to the support of the Navy.

Naval Value of National Intelligence and Skill.—In all probability the military-naval value of the men of the nation is directly proportionate to their commercial worth. There are, however, thousands of men now serving on board our war-ships, who, in time of war, would of course be more valuable than the untrained recruit, no matter what station of life the latter might come from, but this will not affect the general rule. The sailor of the future must be resourceful and observing, and there is hardly a commercial attribute of substantial value necessary to a man in civil life that could not be used in some degree to advantage on ship-board. It is because intelligence and skill are of military value that a brigade of British troops dispersed the hordes of Arabi Pasha in Egypt; that a single legion of soldiers of the French Republic can keep in subjection the warlike tribes of Cochin-China; that a division of a German army corps has obtained the mastery over a million Chinamen in the Kaiser’s colonial possessions near Shantung Promontory; that a comparatively few Russians dominate the Mongols of Manchuria; that fifty thousand American troops have established peace in the Philippines; and that the small band of allied troops made the masterly march from Taku to Peking, in defiance of practically the entire Imperial army of Pechili.

Neither the hordes of Arabi, nor the natives of any country that have attempted to thwart European aggression, fear death; for, inspired by the example of their leaders, they rush time and again up to the muzzle of machine-guns. No one can meet death more stoically than a Chinaman, so that the superiority of the trained and educated soldier does not rest in his courage. It is simply because the ignorant natives are crushed in spirit and are unable to develop their latent industrial powers that they are apparently so helpless against European troops. Once cultivate the commercial and mechanical instincts of any people, and educate them to the possibilities that are within them, and you arouse their military spirit and capabilities.

Our Army of Technological Students.—It is also going to count for naval strength that there are one hundred thousand students in this country now pursuing, at least in part, a mechanical or technical course of instruction. As the institutions are in some cases thousands of miles apart, it is impossible that the instruction of all should be of a routine character, and thus much original research and investigation is being conducted. The training that is given in many of these schools can be utilized in time of war, at least in part, for naval purposes.

The short experience of the Spanish-American war showed how quickly this material could be moulded into shape for military needs. As there are on board some war-ships over one hundred different hydraulic, pneumatic, steam or electric motors, the Navy will be benefited by having the different technological schools study and investigate the appliances used on board ship.

The engineering publications issued by the War and Navy Departments are sought by the technical schools of the country, and this is substantial evidence that naval and military needs and requirements are being considered by eminent engineers and technical educators outside of the service. Our future naval strength will be vastly increased by the interest taken in the construction and operation of a war-ship by the faculty and students of the scientific schools.

The Habit of the Sea.—Then again, only a portion of the nations who aspire to sea-power can acquire the habit of the sea. This habit of the sea is an indefinable attribute that will count for much in taking an inventory of naval strength. It is something more in a modern navy than ability to exist contentedly

under sea conditions. It means, at the present day, decision of character, readiness of resource, powers of endurance, and the adaptability which renders it easy to make the ocean the home of one's adoption. Since the power of the fleet depends not alone upon the efficiency of the battle-ship, but likewise upon innumerable kinds of fleet auxiliaries, it is essential that men of different kinds of sea-training should be secured. The modern war-ship can only be efficiently manned by a crew possessing mechanical ability, who at the same time have the sea-habit. But seamen with different training are needed on the other ships; and, therefore, when war comes, the Navy must draw upon the fishermen and whalers of New England, the oyster-men of the Chesapeake, the sponge-divers of Florida, the sealers of Puget Sound, and the army of seafaring persons who are found at the maritime ports. When our coastwise trade is taken into consideration, our commerce rates close to that of England; and thus tens of thousands of young men are now acquiring the sea-habit.

It is a conservative opinion that, by reason of our great extent of coast, as well by the fact that so many of our citizens are employed in sea-going occupations, we are on an equality with any other naval Power as regards the prevalence among our people of the habit of the sea.

Our Material Wealth.—It should be well understood that the richer a country grows, the more bitter becomes the envy and jealousy of the less fortunate nations that were rivals for supremacy. It, therefore, becomes necessary for a nation, when it accumulates wealth, to take effective means for retaining and protecting its resources. The annual expenditures for the maintenance of an adequate Navy are best represented as an insurance premium for peace. This expenditure, like the payment on an endowment policy of an individual, should be regarded in the nature of a saving rather than a tax. If such expenditure is regularly made, the fact will be appreciated by foreign Powers that a successful conflict with a nation endowed with the resources possessed by the United States, might necessitate the expenditure upon their part of billions rather than hundreds of millions of dollars.

Those nations which are most likely to engage us in war may in part be held in check by the reflection that we might transmute some of our gold into guns, silver into shot, and produce into

powder for the equipment of allies who are their traditional and logical enemies. Our material wealth thus may be more potent than our fleet of battle-ships, under certain circumstances, in giving us peace.

War is now a business rather than an art or science, and the only nations that can indulge in this Satanic employment and expect victory are those which possess a long purse. It is, therefore, highly probable that in the next foreign war more than one Captain of Industry will be consulted, even in regard to the movement of fleets. The man who can shorten the time of supplying ammunition or stores, expedite transportation of material, hasten repairs to battle-ships, increase the speed construction of war vessels, extend the output of armor, improve the range and endurance of the gun, and insure an adequate powder and coal supply, whether or not he wears a uniform, is a military factor that will count in the next conflict.

Direful Consequences of Modern War.—War is not only a business, but it is one of the most cruel nature. General Sherman tersely said, "War is Hell." In these days, when there is a merger of great financial, manufacturing and transportation interests, and the whole tendency of the times seems towards consolidation, there is an absence of pity and sympathy for the individual. The man who is crushed by an alliance of strong factors is rather regarded as one who is not abreast of the times, and who could not adapt himself to existing conditions. Equally little consideration will be paid any nation that cannot hold its own in the race for trade or territorial expansion. The same fate that awaited the Boers will come to any vanquished nation that has exhausted its resources in waging war with a Power that seeks its territory or trade.

While we may believe that we were quite lenient in the demands that we made upon Spain, it is certain that the Spaniards themselves must think quite differently, as they review the loss of Cuba, Porto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. There is hardly a German who does not think that too little indemnity was demanded of France by the Treaty of Versailles, and yet the world at that time stood aghast at the terms exacted. If we get into another foreign war, it will either cause a check to the wealth, influence, and maritime development of this Republic, or it will drive from the Western Continent, and possibly from certain portions of Asia,

the trade as well as the flag of the country that provokes us to battle. When giants contend for supremacy they fight to a finish, and in future wars the great Powers, upon entering war, must be prepared to stake their all. The realization of this truth has been no inconsiderable factor in maintaining a truce between nations that are possibly natural enemies.

Our Military Strength.—Intimately associated with naval strength are the great powers and resources that could be supplied by the Army. The defence that could be made by shore fortifications ought best to be told by some one connected with the military branch. It is certain that, despite the combined work of both Army and Navy, an enemy might find it as easy a matter to land as to disembark a contingent of troops. Through carelessness, or by some mistake upon our part, a few hostile troops might effect a landing; but, once they landed, few would ever get home. The same thing might be said of battle-ships. While we may not be able to prevent hostile vessels from reaching our coast, it is highly probable that we would prevent many from returning to their home base.

Our Actual Strength Fully Comprehended by Those High in Authority.—It is fortunate for the good of every navy, as well as for the peace of the world, that those in executive control of affairs fully realize that other resources than fleets of battle-ships and large standing armies are requisite to wage a modern war. And it has been through some wise dispensation of Providence that modern navies have been developed along lines that make them exceedingly weak for distant operations.

The performance of the "Oregon" may be cited to disprove the general truth of the statement as to the weakness of the modern battle-ship for distant service. But the work of that vessel in reaching the Cuban coast in a high state of efficiency after her long journey from Puget Sound was phenomenal, and will seldom, if ever, be repeated by a battle-ship. It was absolutely an engineering triumph to reach the battle-line in the condition in which she did, and the engineering world, if not the naval experts will measure the performance of that part of her work from this standpoint.

The magnificent work of the "Oregon" will stand for a long time as a spur and incentive rather than as a precedent that can be expected of other battle-ships. The repairs effected at the Navy

Yards shortly after the battle of Santiago, upon the other battle-ships that were in that fight, will better tell of the average condition of affairs that will result on board a modern battle-ship when operating even a short distance from a home base. It is, therefore, possible for practically every nation to put up a strong defence, and thus the Powers that provoke a conflict will generally be compelled to force operations, and one need not have prophetic talents to foresee that nearly every victory under such circumstances would be a small remove from defeat.

It was because President Cleveland, with that military genius which seems to inspire some civil administrators in times of great emergency, clearly saw that the eventual outcome of a possible contest would favor that country which could remain longest on the battle-line, that he gave the world a great surprise in his Venezuelan message. With that broadness of mind, and with that fearlessness of consequences in the discharge of plain duty which characterized his official actions, he gave every possible foe to understand that the military strength of America was not evidenced alone by the number of our battle-ships. And it was because he knew that threatened dangers could not become actualities that he made this statement:

“Firm in my conviction that, while it is a grievous thing to contemplate the two great English-speaking peoples of the world as being otherwise than friendly competitors in the onward march of civilization, and strenuous and worthy rivals in all the arts of peace, there is no calamity which a nation can invite which equals that which follows a supine submission to wrong and injustice, and the consequent loss of national self-respect and honor, beneath which are shielded and defended a people's safety and greatness. . . . In making these recommendations I am fully alive to the responsibilities incurred, and keenly realize all the consequences that may follow.”

He thoroughly understood that the contest would not be altogether between guns, but possibly between resources. Probably he had also in mind, in measuring consequences, the remark of General Sherman, who stated that the difference between himself and General Grant rested in the fact that in planning battle, he (General Sherman) could more clearly see the losses that would be suffered by himself, while the man of Appomattox looked for the injury that would be inflicted upon his foe.

It was likewise, probably, a clear and comprehensive knowledge

of our immense military strength in North-American waters, and of the inability of the fleet of any nation to do effective and continuous work in distant waters against any nation with a good-sized navy, combined with that great love and tenderness of heart which he possessed, that prompted President McKinley to appeal so long and earnestly to Spain to discontinue an administrative policy in Cuba, whose prolongation would inevitably lead to war. But the time having come when only a call to arms could decide the questions at issue, there was a confidence in our Chief Executive as to the outcome that was reflected in that message to Congress wherein he said:

"The position of Spain being thus made known and the demands of the United States being denied, with a complete rupture of intercourse, by the act of Spain, I have been constrained, in exercise of the power and authority conferred upon me by joint resolution to proclaim, under date of April 22, 1898, a blockade of certain ports of the north coast of Cuba. . . .

"In view of the measures so taken, and with a view to the adoption of such other measures as may be necessary to enable me to carry out the expressed will of the Congress of the United States in the premises, I now recommend to your honorable body the adoption of a joint resolution declaring that a state of war exists between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Spain; and I urge speedy action thereon, to the end that the definition of the international status of the United States with the belligerent Power may be made known and the assertion of all its rights and the maintenance of all its duties in the conduct of a public war may be assured."

The events of the past two months show that the President has had no apprehension of trouble, either from a single nation or with any combination of Powers whose community of interests may prompt them for a time to work in accord. In his Annual Message to the Fifty-seventh Congress, President Roosevelt gave expression to his belief in our powers of defence, and his assurance of continued peace, by declaring:

"There is not a cloud on the horizon at present. There seems not the slightest chance of trouble with a foreign Power. We most earnestly hope that this state of things may continue, and the way to insure its continuance is to provide for a thoroughly efficient Navy."

The Navy is thus a guarantee for peace, but if we possessed battle-ships alone, without the agricultural, mineral, manufacturing, and material resources that are at the command of this nation,

then we should soon be at the mercy of those who are looking for colonial and commercial extension.

An Adequate and Efficient Navy, A Factor For Peace.—In thus briefly recalling the auxiliary attributes of naval strength, there has been no desire or purpose to lead any one to the belief that we should not continue to provide for a stronger Navy, both as regards personnel and material.

We need an efficient service, of such strength that it could hold its own, at least near our own coast, with any fleet that could be assembled even by a combination of Powers. And yet, to effect this purpose, we need not possess the largest navy, for the modern battle-ship has so many engineering weaknesses that the actual force that could be brought here, even by a league of foreign Powers, would be only a fraction of the strength that some experts believe could be assembled.

Either by reason of our material wealth, force of circumstances, or manifest destiny, we have become a World Power. The Navy is the best instrument that can be used for the extension of trade, protection of commerce, securing justice to those weaker nations of this continent who are helpless to resist stronger Powers, and even for the preservation of that honor and self-respect which are essential to keep alive the spirit of liberty.

The Navy should be the glory of our great people, and its size should be commensurate with the character and extent of the interests that it may be called upon to defend. There need be but little fear that for many years it can be too large. It is a service that a Dictator has never been able to bring to his support.

The Parable of the Talents can be well applied to the Navy. The Master, who in this case is the people, will receive a return from the naval service directly proportional to the size of the talents which have been given for its creation, maintenance and operation.

It has made for the peace of the world that the navies of the several leading Powers are powerful shields of defence, but uncertain weapons for distant work, and thus a conflict between great fleets can only be expected between Powers whose possessions are not distant from one another.

GEO. W. MELVILLE.